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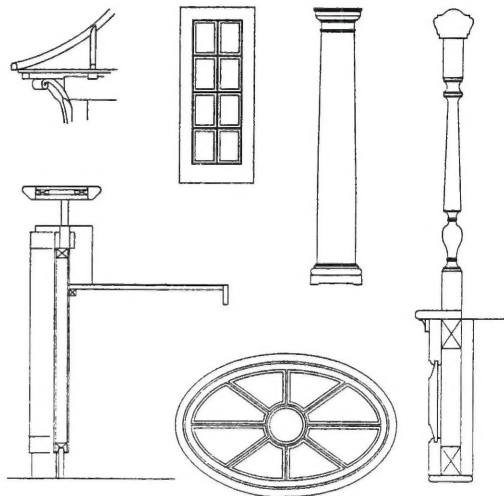
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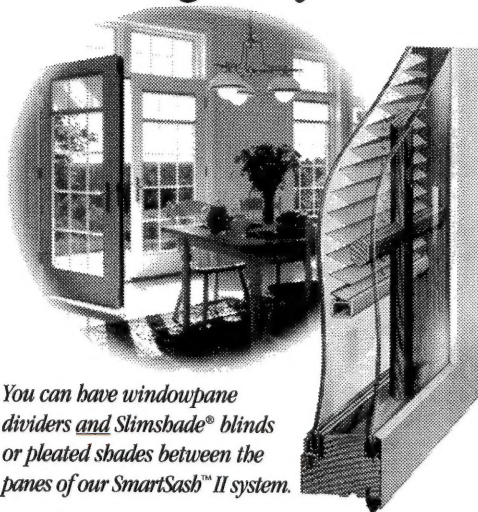
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Review of Virginia Architecture

12

Speaking Volumes

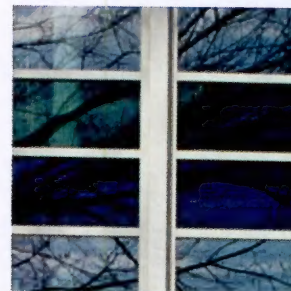
The Library of Virginia, designed by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill in association with The Glave Firm, makes grand civic gestures to the Richmond streetscape while providing a commodious setting for the simple of pleasure of reading a book. *By Vernon Mays*

16

Primary Concerns

The incompatibility of an aging physical plant, new teaching methods, and advancing technology set the stage for the creation of a renewed Wasena Elementary School, designed by Sherertz Franklin Crawford Shaffner. *By Vernon Mays*

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p. 16

6



Design Lines

new developments in design

9



Date Lines

a calendar of events, lectures, and exhibitions

10



Books

looks like nowhere to me

24



Profile

keeping watch over 64,000 square miles

32



Taking Notice

doing the small thing well

On the cover:
The Library of Virginia.
Photo by Prakash Patel.

In our next issue:
The Tradition of
Craft

Broader Horizons for Alliance with New Director

In its ten-year history, the Preservation Alliance of Virginia has enjoyed much success in raising awareness of the benefits of historic preservation in cities and towns. But with the arrival in December of new Executive Director Katherine "Kat" Imhoff, the statewide advocacy group may be broadening its horizons.

"I am a strong believer in rural landscape, roads . . . the countryside that links all of these [historic] properties together," said Imhoff, who until recently was vice president of conservation and development of the Piedmont Environmental Council, a Warrenton-based watchdog group that seeks protection of rural lands. Imhoff says the Preservation Alliance has done a good job of documenting the value of historic preservation and has been an effective advocate with the business community. "The Alliance has been very, very good in communities, both commercial and residential neighborhoods," she said. "And I think we will continue building on that focus. But we have not had the time to spend on archaeological or Native American preservation, for instance."

In previous state and local government positions, Imhoff studied the growth of cities and communities. While she was executive director of the state Commission on Population Growth and Development many of these efforts blossomed. But proposed legislation arising from the study failed in the General Assembly – an outcome she attributes partly to poor timing.

"There is such an interest in environmental and conservation issues now that was not there four or five years ago," she said, noting the emergence of statewide planning initiatives in Vermont, Georgia, Oregon, and Washington. Leaders in those places "have thought as a state how they would like their natural and cultural resources preserved. We hoped that Virginia would join the ranks." Efforts in the Commonwealth, she said, were tied to legislation, whereas in the other states there was strong support from the executive branch.



Imhoff: "A strong believer in rural landscape."

Under Imhoff's leadership, the growth commission also recommended disseminating more information to local governments concerning patterns of growth. This evolved into the statewide Government Information System, which was approved by the 1997 General Assembly. As a result of the commission's recommendation for strategic thinking about open space and recreation needs, a recreation fund and foundation were established. The commission also lobbied the state to craft a strategic plan for state agency cooperation in areas such as building livable communities and preserving prime farm land.

Imhoff "is correct in that we need to look beyond the individual buildings," and her agenda has strong support in the state, said John Wells, a program coordinator for the Virginia Department of Historic Resources. The department frequently accepts historic easements "because open space is often a critical component of a historic property," said Wells. Monticello, to cite one example, is a fine example of architecture. But without the mountaintop view across preserved fields, the experience of the estate would be greatly diminished.

A city and environmental planner by training, Imhoff has extensive experience in historic district planning and documentation for towns and rural areas and has served a term on the board of the Preservation Alliance. She is a former director of planning for the town of Leesburg and served as chief of community development for Albemarle County. Among her first duties with the alliance: moving the organization's offices from Staunton to Charlottesville.

To promote these planning ideals, Imhoff hopes architects and planners will work with her to develop cooperative teams that meet with communities to discuss changes in policy documents and administrative guidelines. "It's done community by community," she said.

Public Events Set for Architecture Week

Building on last year's successes, AIA James River is expanding its Architecture Week activities to include public tours, lectures, and hands-on activities for children in Charlottesville and Richmond. The events, including open houses at architect-designed houses, will provide opportunities for the public to meet architects and better understand what they do.

The activities run from April 11-20. Organizers hope that the response to the program in central Virginia will prompt an expansion of Architecture Week activities to other parts of Virginia. "The goal is to become like Garden Week," says Michael Stoneking, AIA, noting that the format could develop into a statewide event with strong local participation.

The programs offer an opportunity for architects to listen. "It is not about other programs or awards. It is specifically externalized for architects to hear from the people," says Stoneking. Included will be several opportunities for children to get involved, from an exhibition of architectural models to a chance to build with Legos. Open-to-the-public house tours will be conducted on Sunday afternoons.

While details of some events were unavailable at press time, the following activities are scheduled:

- April 11: Reception and display of entries for "Charlottesville Visions" competition, 5:30-7:30 p.m. at the Albemarle County Historical Society, 200 Second St. N.E., Charlottesville.
- April 12: "Archibridge," a kids' day activity in which teams design and build bridges, 12-4 p.m. at Central Place on the downtown Mall, Charlottesville.
- April 13: Tour of architects' houses in Charlottesville/Albemarle from 12-4 p.m. Fee is \$5 in advance; \$7 at the door.
- April 15: Tour of the Academical Village, U.Va., at 1 p.m. by J. Murray Howard, FAIA. Meet on Rotunda steps facing The Lawn. RSVP to 295-4204 by April 14.
- April 16: A lecture about Ethel Bailey Furman, the first black woman registered as a U.S. architect, by Jessica Breeden at 7 p.m. in Richmond. Location TBA.
- April 17: A lecture about Monument Avenue by Robert Winthrop, AIA, at 7 p.m., St. James Church, 1205 W. Franklin St., Richmond.
- April 17: A guided tour of Main Street Station in Richmond beginning at noon in the shed area near the west entrance.
- April 17: Panel discussion on "The

Value of Good Design," noon at the Jefferson-Madison Regional Library, 201 E. Market St., Charlottesville.

■ April 17: Lecture at U.Va. by Princeton, New Jersey, architect Michael Graves at 6:30 p.m. Location TBA.

■ April 18: Exhibition opening of architectural models built by students and architects, Levine/Moore House, 323 N. 20th Street, Richmond. Exhibit continues through April 20.

■ April 18: Reception and lecture by writer Edwin Slipek, Jr., at 6 p.m. at the Levine/Moore House in Shockoe Bottom.

■ April 19: Walking tour of Shockoe Bottom in Richmond, conducted by historian Tyler Potterfield. Also open houses will be held at three Richmond architecture firms: Baskerville & Son, SWA Architects, and BOB Architecture.

■ April 19: Author John Wells signs his new book, *The Virginia Architects*, from 4-7 p.m. at The Barret House, 15 South 5th Street, Richmond.

■ April 19: Lego building activities for kids at the Farmers Market, 17th and East Main streets, Richmond, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.

■ April 20: Tour of architects' houses in and around Richmond from 12-4 p.m. Call 804-674-5248 for details.

■ April 20: Reception from 5-7:30 p.m. at the Shockoe Bottom Arts Center, 2001 E. Grace St., Richmond, with performance by The Architects' Jazz Band.

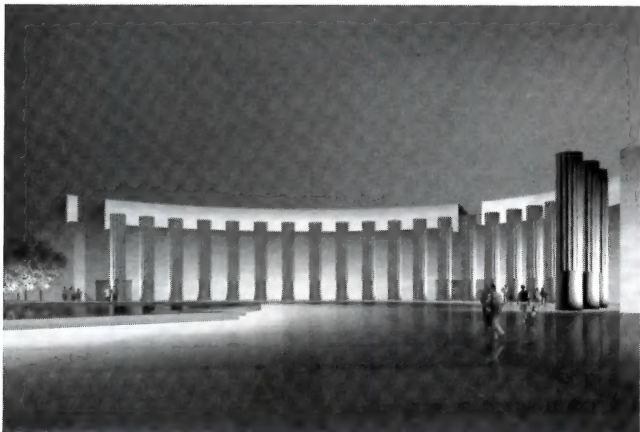
For more information, call Mike Stoneking at 804-295-4204 in Charlottesville or ALA James River at 804-674-5248 in Richmond.

Architect Friedrich St. Florian Wins World War II Memorial Competition

Ten years of legislative effort, site selection, and design competition culminated in January with the selection of architect Friedrich St. Florian to design the World War II Memorial that will be built on the Mall in Washington, D.C.

The design by St. Florian, former dean of the Rhode Island School of Design, was selected from among six finalists and 400 entries overall. His winning scheme creates a sunken plaza surrounding the existing Rainbow Pool at the east end of the reflecting pool that stretches between the Lincoln Memorial and Washington Monument. Two ends of the new oval plaza will be bordered by a curved, monumental colonnade.

St. Florian's design was the result of a two-stage competition administered by the American Battle Monuments Commission. Collaborating on the project will be Hartman-Cox Architects of Washington, D.C., and landscape architects Oehme, van Sweden & Associates.



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■ **"Grand Illusions: Decorative Painting in North Carolina."** An exhibit examining how decorative painting was used historically to enrich buildings and furniture. No charge. March 17-May 30 at The Barret House, Richmond. 804-644-3041.

■ **Will Bruder.** This cutting-edge architect from New River, Arizona, discusses his work. Co-sponsored by AIA Blue Ridge. No charge. March 27 at 6 p.m. in Randolph Hall, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg. 540-231-9934.

■ **"Architecture Week."** A slate of activities in Richmond and Charlottesville organized for the public from April 11-20. (See "Design Lines," page 6.) For information on Richmond events, call AIA James River at 804-674-5248; for Charlottesville, call Michael Stoneking at 804-295-4204.

■ **"Building for the People."** Drawings and models representing winners of the GSA's 1996 Design Awards. Represented firms include Kohn Pederson Fox, Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer, and Pei Cobb Freed & Partners. No charge. March 20-May 4 at the National Building Museum. 202-272-2448.

■ **"Man Ray: Prophet of the Avant-Garde."** A televised profile of photographer, painter, object maker, collagist, printmaker, and philosopher Man Ray. Airs April 9 on PBS.

■ **"Monumental Miniatures."** An exhibition of souvenir buildings collected over 150 years, including Roman temples, Parisian monuments, and Cleopatra's Needle. Fee. Through May 4 at The Octagon, Washington, D.C. 202-638-3105.

■ **"Views of Washington: Perspective Drawings by Mori Shizume."** Renderings of Washington landmarks include the Capitol, National Archives, and the National Building Museum. No charge. Through May 18. National Building Museum. 202-272-2448.

■ **The Renwick Gallery,** a Washington museum of contemporary American crafts, celebrates its 25th anniversary with a Festival of Craft Education, April 26-27, and special exhibition running through July 13. No charge for exhibit. 202-357-2700.

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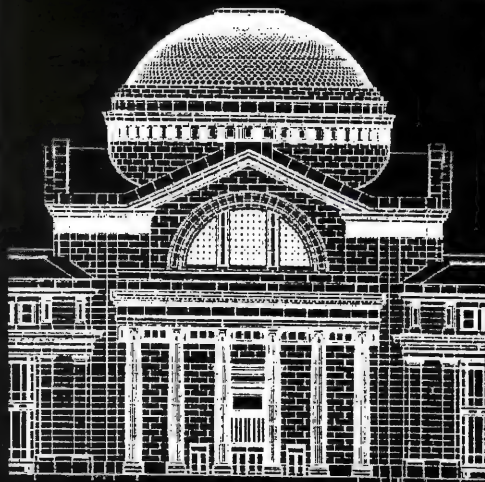
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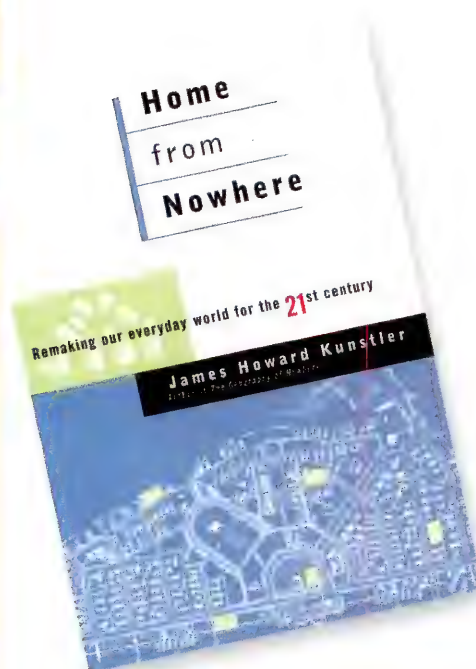
Home From Nowhere: Remaking Our Everyday World for the 21st Century. By James Howard Kunstler. 302 pp. Illustrated. New York: Simon & Schuster. \$24.00 hardcover.

Review by Chris Hubbard

If anyone doubts that America has suffered a decline in social connectedness, civic life, and the common good in the late 20th century, they're in for a rude awakening at the hands of James Howard Kunstler. "Historically," writes Kunstler, "our national character has been, by and large, generous, diligent, and idealistic – if not always wholly honorable. And so, lately – really since our great victory over the evil Axis in World War II – we have become, by sheer inertia, a nation of overfed clowns, crybabies, slackers, deadbeats, sadists, cads, whores, and crooks."

Such is the tenor of Kunstler's latest book, *Home From Nowhere*, in which he critiques the cultural drift of postwar America. Kunstler's vehicle for criticism is "the public realm," that portion of the everyday world that belongs to everybody, including streets, highways, town squares, parks, and national forests. Surprisingly, however, Kunstler says America's low regard for public spaces is a virtual tradition in this country's history – starting with the pioneer tradition of rugged individualism, evolving in the industrial age into cities laid out for the convenience of real estate speculators and industry, and culminating with suburbs that provide a place of fantasy and escape.

Kunstler blames a 50-year-long proliferation of automobile-dependent developments for the degradation of American civic life. In the process, he asserts, citizens have become self-centered consumers with no implicit responsibilities beyond their own needs and desires, the combination of which produce a predilection for "fast cars, goopy microwaved cheese snacks, prolonged television viewing, [and] compulsive shopping."



Kunstler asserts that "the public realm became so atrocious in the postwar decades that the Disney Corporation was able to create an artificial substitute for it and successfully sell it as a commodity." Besides the ugliness, inconvenience, and social costs exacted by misdirected growth, Kunstler takes pains to enumerate the economic costs of sprawl. To wit: With five percent of the world's population, America consumes 25 percent of the world's oil. Half of that is burned in motor vehicles, which Americans drive twice as much as their counterparts in Europe and Japan. The cost of an automobile-dependent lifestyle: a staggering \$799 billion per year when one accounts for construction, maintenance, traffic, pollution, accidents, and lost productivity.

Kunstler also pinpoints the problems caused by centralized agriculture, which destroys soil, pollutes water, and leads to further dependence on oil and the highway infrastructure. The largest centers of U.S. agriculture are the Midwest and California, where most produce is trucked from. In the Midwest, the topsoil depth has dwindled from six feet to six inches in places due to the use of herbicides and pesticides which have killed the grasses and microorganisms that knit the soil together. Continual irrigation in California's Central Valley has destroyed the soil through salinization.

In the book's second half, Kunstler analyzes zoning codes and other impediments to creating communities that encourage walking. Conventional zoning practices, he notes, create a separate zone for each major activity, isolating work from shop-

nowher Man

ping from living from recreation. The missing link, of course, is the physical connection that transports people from one to another. That's where the car comes in. In the process, Kunstler says, the public realm is diverted from its realization as human-scaled civic places and instead becomes a soulless kingdom ruled by automobiles. Kunstler's antidote is to throw out conventional zoning laws. "Set them on fire if possible and make a public ceremony of it. While you're at it, throw out your 'master plans' too. Replace these things with a new traditional town-planning ordinance, which prescribes a more desirable everyday environment."

Kunstler casts his vote for the principles of traditional town planning outlined in the charter of the Congress for the New Urbanism, which puts emphasis on the neighborhood as the basic building block. Using the yardstick of a five-minute walk as the distance from edge to center, neighborhoods would contain shops, workplaces, community facilities, and mass transit – as well as a mix of housing types at a range of prices built along streets that are a pleasure to walk.

To illustrate his views, Kunstler provides revealing case studies of a number of recent efforts. Some are successes and some are failures. Predictably, he lauds Seaside in Florida as a great example of a walkable town. Seaside, though, has rapidly become an international tourist destination, transformed by its celebrity status from a sleepy vacation getaway into a high-priced resort. Attempts to provide moderate-cost residences there have been swept

aside by a tide of speculation.

A better example, perhaps, is the revitalization of downtown Providence, Rhode Island. Its "Downcity" area, which encompasses about 30 blocks, is largely abandoned due to the decanting of the population to the suburbs. But the building stock there is exceptional, full of artful and ornate commercial buildings from the turn of the century. A charrette held there in 1994 focused on the conversion of old office buildings and department stores into apartments, a strategy intended to generate a population that would encourage small businesses and enliven the streets. Through the involvement of developers, the city, local nonprofits, and the University of Rhode Island, Kunstler believes that Providence is poised to become an exemplary case favoring the reuse of downtowns in America.

But not all of Kunstler's propositions ring true. He charges, for example, that Modern architecture has impoverished our public spaces and he uses this notion – along with the counterargument which rationalizes traditional architecture – as support for the concept that only traditional architecture can define rich, human-scaled spaces in walkable neighborhoods. This view, which has become wrongly associated with New Urbanism, is not among the charter of principles from the Congress for the New Urbanism. It is actually the view of a faction whose ideological leader is British architect and theorist Leon Krier.

This subgroup maintains that Modern buildings are a sterile, disproportionate architecture devoid of charm, beauty, and human scale – virtues they claim are inherent in traditional architecture. The problem with this position is that it fails to acknowledge architecture as an evolving discipline. To say that "Modernism failed – therefore contemporary architecture will fail" does not follow. Admittedly, mid-century Modernism embraced the automobile. But if new planning is based on the foundation stone of walkable neighborhoods, contemporary architecture will rise to the occasion.

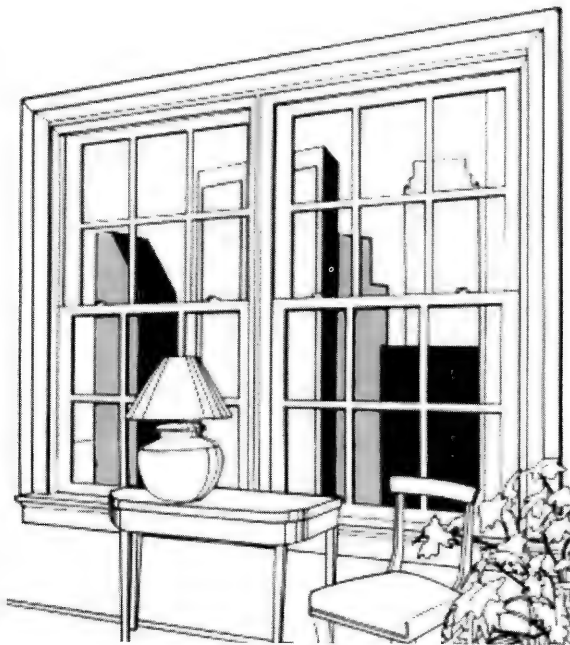
In this text, Kunstler distills his critique of the American public realm and civic life contained in his previous book, *The Geography of Nowhere*. In the earlier book, he wrote as a layperson trying to make sense of decaying public space. At times, it seemed a mere collection of anecdotes charged with anger and ridicule. However, in this sequel Kunstler turns anger and frustration into constructive thought. Of the two books, *Home From Nowhere* seems more confident, less angry, and more coherent in development of the thesis that economic forces spawned the destructive trend of mid-century planning.

Home From Nowhere strives to reach a popular consensus about what is good or bad in America and in it Kunstler retains a justifiable amount of the anger and ridicule from his earlier book. The writing style is cynical and supercharged, betraying Kunstler's background as a former editor for *Rolling Stone*. That style may well appeal to Baby Boomers, who appear to be the book's target audience, based both on Kunstler's choice of language and his sharp criticism of the generation directly preceding the Boomers – namely their parents.

Kunstler declares that his goal for *Home From Nowhere* is an argument for raising planning standards. And he poses suggestions for accomplishing just that. Although it tends to dwell on the worst trends in America, rather than seek a balance between good and bad, Kunstler's critique is a well-deserved wake-up call for designers and citizens across America.

Chris Hubbard is a principal of WHA Architecture and Planning in Falls Church and the producer of a new documentary on the reshaping of the American way of life.

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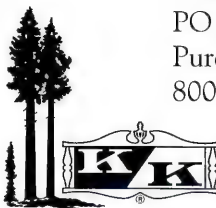
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Speaking Volumes

The Library of Virginia • Skidmore, Owings & Merrill with The Glave Firm

At first blush, the impressive new Library of Virginia in Richmond is likely to strike many observers as just another Modern concoction with little reference to the classical traditions of architecture. But not so fast, cautions architect Craig M. Hartman, AIA. For there's method to the madness.

Hartman wanted to spark an instant awareness of the precious collections as visitors enter the building. The image that sprang to his mind was Christopher Wren's library at Cambridge University. "There, you walk in and see the main book stacks running perpendicular to the long, navelike space," Hartman recalls. "And you immediately sense that you are in the presence of books."

Borrowing from the wisdom of Wren, Hartman took a similar approach in his design for the expansive lobby of the \$43 million library, which opened in January. The solution is a symbolic stroke of inspiration: a commodious entrance court rich in detail and surrounded on three sides by books. These volumes, clearly visible through glass but still beyond reach, are accessible only by ascending a grand staircase to the reading rooms above.

"We really wanted this to be a democratic space," says Hartman, a principal of Skidmore, Owings and Merrill in San Francisco. "The monumental stair has a large base, something broad enough that school kids can sit on it and wait for friends."

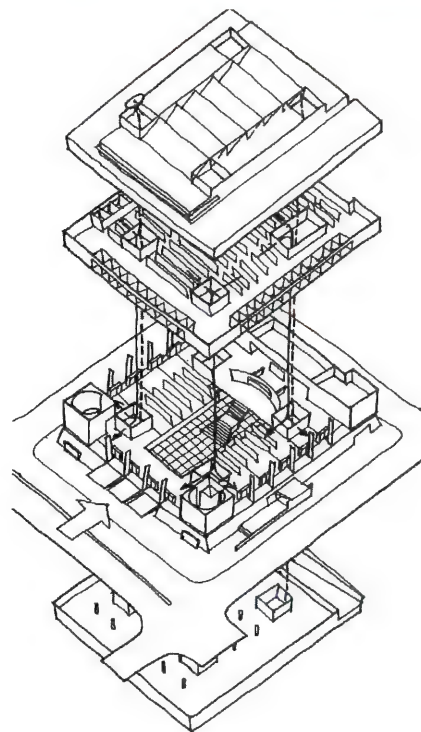
The desire to create an inviting building influenced everything from the design of the front steps – which splay out as if to welcome visitors – to the fundamental character of the building. The architects studied a variety of massing alternatives, some as tall as eight or nine stories. Costs were contained by making the library shorter and wider. More importantly, the building's status as a public institution begged for a profile that was more closely associated with civic institutions than with office buildings.

Hartman, collaborating with The Glave Firm of Richmond as architects of record, also faced many requirements from the library. First, the institution was eager to overcome space limita-



Mark Fagerburg/Courtesy The Library of Virginia

The library (above) occupies a prominent site along Broad Street. Second-floor bookcases (facing page) overlook the spacious lobby. Diagram (right) shows organizing concept: atrium surrounded by reading rooms; closed stacks above; offices with sawtooth roof on top; and parking below street.





Photos: Prakash Patel

The architecture of the lobby (left) plays up the importance of books. Light-filled reading rooms (above right) line the sides of the building.

tions and the lack of environmental control posed by its old building near Capitol Square. Second, “the paradigm was really changing in terms of technology – and we wanted to face up to the challenge,” says Nolan T. Yelich, the State Librarian. Finally, the library wanted to make a lasting contribution to the state – and the nation. “The collection here is of national importance,” Yelich notes, adding that the archives documenting early American history are sometimes taken for granted in their home state.

The sum of those criteria was a monumental building, one which Yelich envisioned as “a broad-based cultural institution” rather than a mish-mash of dark catacombs. The spacious lobby, 256-seat auditorium, and trio of first-floor meeting rooms comprise a reservoir of public resources that fills a need along the growing civic corridor of Richmond’s Broad Street. During Black History Month, for example, the spaces were host to African-American dance and choral performances.

“The other challenge was creating an institution that would be comfortable for every generation,” says Yelich. To him, that meant mixing traditional access to “real documents and microfilm” with computer-based research tools that make the Library of Virginia the most technologically advanced library in the state.

Hartman interpreted the assignment as a new type of library that emphasized public outreach without compromising library functions and the security of rare documents. To accomplish that, the basic organization of the building evolved as a kind of layer cake. The public spaces – including a 1,200-square-foot gallery and an orientation room for visiting school groups – are located on the inward-focused first level. The second floor is conceived as a



Soft light filters through rice paper shades into government documents room (at left in photo, above).



piano nobile open to views of the outdoors. Located there are the reading rooms (which have open shelving for 45,000 volumes compared to the 10,000 items available in the old library), reference rooms for government documents and maps, periodicals, and the busy microfilm reading area. One level higher is the sanctum for rare books, visible from the lobby through a large window above the grand staircase, but requiring special access.

Above the lobby and reading rooms are two floors of closed stacks, each the equivalent size of two football fields. Today these floors are loaded with 55 miles of fixed metal bookshelves, but the building was engineered so the stacks can be retrofitted later with higher-capacity compact shelving. The top floor holds most of the staff, with private offices ringing the perimeter and open workstations beneath clerestory windows in the center.

Hartman manipulated the nuance of daylight throughout the building. It shows in the curvature of the reading room ceilings, the projecting sun screens on the outer façade, and particularly in the front corner reference rooms, where light filters in through rice-paper shades sandwiched in glass. "Those rooms were intended to be quieter, more intimate," says Hartman.

A partner in the project was the City of Richmond, which hopes the library will be a catalyst for the revitalization of Broad Street, the city's former retail heart. Yelich says the desire to be an integral part of downtown strongly influenced early discussions about the character of nearby buildings and led to exhaustive studies of design options. "There wasn't an attempt to create a figure and plop it down on that block," he says. "And I think the design is beginning to wear well with people."

—Vernon Mays

Warren McArthur, Jr.

Storeroom Treasures

With the move to the new Library of Virginia accomplished, design circles are abuzz with word of a treasure-trove of 20th century artifacts that once furnished its stalwart predecessor near Capitol Square. Remaining in temporary storage – and destined for eventual sale – are some 100 pieces of handsome tubular furniture designed by little-known Warren McArthur, Jr., whose distinctive works have won a new following.

Born the son of a Chicago industrialist in 1885, McArthur was exposed to good design early in life. His father commissioned Frank Lloyd Wright to design the family home and sent Warren to Cornell to study engineering. In the 1920s, Wright was hired to work on the Arizona Biltmore, an ambitious resort that Warren and his brothers built near Phoenix. As furniture designer, Warren found aluminum to be the ideal material for the indoor-outdoor hotel. He also launched Phoenix's first radio station and designed the "Wonderbus," an early camper. "McArthur's life reads like 'Tucker,'" says New York antiques dealer Stuart Parr, referring to the bittersweet 1988 film about auto designer Preston Tucker. "He had an up-and-down career and went from riches to rags."

McArthur's furniture was emblematic of the time – an expression of sleek Modernism that unabashedly celebrated the capacity of the machine. In 1932 he patented a furniture assembly system that employed anodized-aluminum tubes and metal reinforcing rods. The joints were defined by aluminum rings and set off by screw-on finial caps. "Light yet strong – and manufactured, assembled, or disassembled cheaply," he wrote in his patent treatise. These were the pieces purchased in 1939 for the Virginia State Library.

Inside the stoic edifice, the most dazzling (and least visited) space was its rare book room. Entering this windowless space was like stepping into the sophisticated salon of an ocean liner. Research carrels and secured book storage areas were carefully delineated spaces encased in glass or wire mesh and trimmed in handsome aluminum frames. Aluminum railings defined the mezzanine level. McArthur-designed reading tables with aluminum legs and gray plastic-laminate tops created an austere but elegant environment. Rarely have architecture and furnishings meshed as well: one couldn't tell where the architect left off and McArthur began.

Other upholstered aluminum furniture made by New York-based Warren McArthur Corporation was peppered throughout the building's offices, lounges, workrooms, and restrooms. The collection – including armchairs, side chairs, tables, desks, mirrors, and hat racks – was known only to employees and a few devotees of Modern design. Many pieces disappeared or were damaged. But others remain in good shape. A library spokesperson says the best pieces will be retained, although most of the collection is to be sold at auction.

In the 1940s, McArthur converted his factories to the war effort and grew from a 50-man operation to one with 1,200 employees. At war's end, 80 percent of all military aircraft seating was McArthur-made. But shifts in style ended the demand for tubular furniture and, when he died in 1961, McArthur was virtually forgotten. Parr discovered McArthur's furniture in 1987 at a flea market. Now he is a leading dealer of original Warren McArthur pieces and owns their world reproduction rights. Says Parr: "McArthur's pieces have a soft finish to the aluminum – unlike anything done by anyone else." —Edwin Slipek, Jr.





Primary Concerns

Wasena Elementary School • Sherertz Franklin Crawford Shaffner

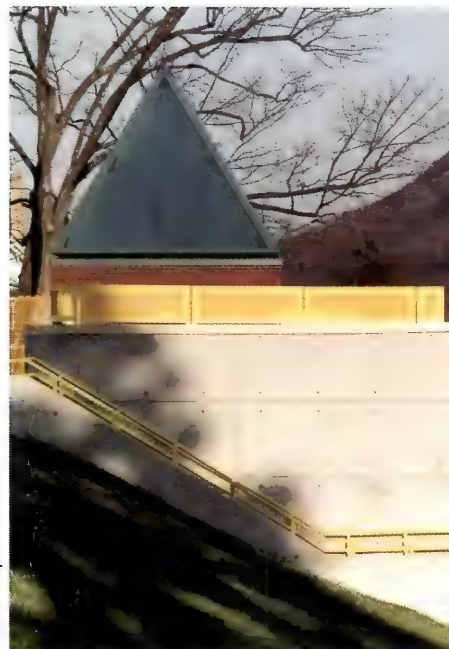
Classic urban schools from the early 20th century have an undeniable dignity and charm to them – solid, substantial, and appropriately scaled for their surroundings. And the original Wasena Elementary School, built in 1928 among the roller-coaster hills of Roanoke, was no different. A slender brick boxcar of a building, the two-story structure was blessed with a handsome front entrance, limestone coping and sills, and, on each end, brick walls skillfully laid in a decorative diaper pattern.

For more than 20 years, that was how people pictured Wasena. But with the onset of the postwar baby boom, enrollment swelled and a 12,000-square-foot addition was built on the steep hill behind the old school. It was a bit awkward, with floors that were out of alignment with the original school's by half a level. But nobody seemed to mind the fact that you had to climb a few stairs to get from the front part of the building to the back. Not until the city embarked on a renovation program of its aging schools in the 1990s did the nonaligned floors become an issue – an issue of wheelchair accessibility.

Age, however, was Wasena's greatest shortcoming. "The driving force behind the renovation was a general upgrade of the mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems," says Stephen M. Tenace, AIA, the project architect for Sherertz Franklin

New vestibules with bands of colored glass bring light into the school at each end (facing page). Concrete box of multi-purpose room is trimmed with colorful railings and toylike pyramids (right).

Photos: Stephen Tenace

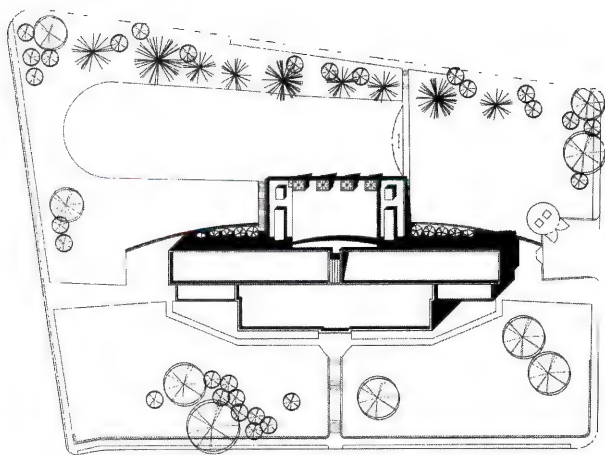


Crawford Shaffner, of Roanoke. "Educationally it was small and cramped and outdated. Any kind of special education need was crammed into whatever space was available. It wasn't falling down – it just didn't meet the current needs of the city."

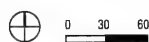
SFCS' initial thoughts on the renovation tended toward upgrading the 1952 addition and installing a double-sided elevator that would allow wheelchair access to every floor. But an inspired city schools' representative, Assistant Superintendent for Operations Richard Kelley, ventured: "Show me what you could do if you got rid of the old building. What would it cost?"

The architects returned to the drawing board and came back with a plan to demolish the 1950s addition, replacing it with a new structure that greatly simplifies the school's organization, promotes ease of circulation, and vastly upgrades an aging physical plant. Their solution not only satisfied neighborhood concerns that the school's familiar profile remain part of the streetscape, but it provided appropriate spaces for functions such as the library, clinic, and kindergarten classes – which were making do with makeshift quarters.

Wasena's addition is an altogether Modern building that sits comfortably among the trim houses surrounding it in the city's Raleigh Court neighborhood. Students flow freely in and out through three pairs of doors along the front, new glass-enclosed vestibules at each end of the building, and two smaller sets of doors tucked around back. The sun-filled lightwells are a far cry from the dark, dead-end corridors that once typified the school. Framed in a steel skeleton and sheathed in alternating bands of green, blue, and clear glass, these extensions of the central corridor bring ample amounts of light into the building, creating a



Site Plan





Four luminous pyramids beside the school playground (top) cover the tops of skylights that allow natural light into the new multipurpose room below (inset).

bright atmosphere that doubles as a gallery for the ever-surprising creations of young artists.

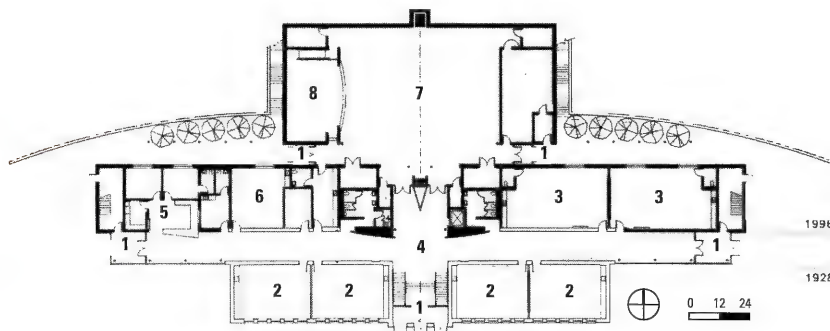
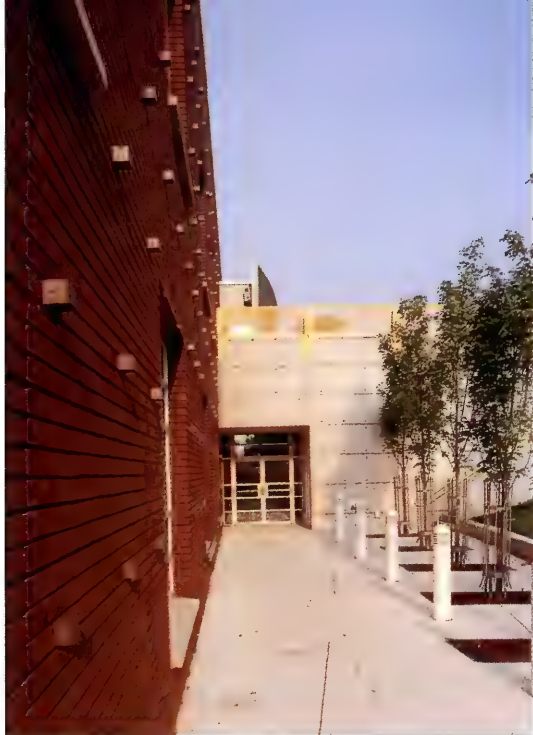
Among other benefits, the 19,000-square-foot addition provides six spacious classrooms that, in combination with the eight original ones, can be organized in pairs according to grade level. “The teachers felt it was helpful to have the same grades side-by-side for planning purposes,” says Kelley, who notes that the arrangement also makes it easier to experiment with new teaching combinations.

The largest single element of the project is the multipurpose room, which was accommodated on the tight three-acre site by digging deep into the hillside behind the school. An open, unadorned concrete box that functions as a cafeteria, auditorium, and gymnasium, the simple space recalls the elemental architecture of Louis I. Kahn or European Rationalists such as Switzerland’s Mario Botta. Was Tenace mindful of these prece-

dents? “I couldn’t say they were not an influence, because they were,” he allows. “But the wall *had* to be concrete because it is a retaining wall. And I also thought, if it’s a concrete wall, why cover it up? Why not just leave it exposed?”

The addition of four skylights in the room’s ceiling allow a pleasing quality of light inside. Sunlight raking across the concrete surface highlights the subtle texture and pattern of control joints and tie holes left by the wall’s construction process. Outside, along one edge of the playground, the skylights make a playful row of brick boxes topped with luminous green pyramids, transforming what might otherwise have been a dreadful rooftop.

SFCS engaged in a clever bit of formal play in their treatment of materials. They observed that the front of the original school was composed with a regimented pattern of windows placed against the subtle hint of color introduced by randomly placed bricks. On the new rear façade, they did the reverse, creating a



First Floor Plan

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------------|
| 1 Entrance | 5 Office |
| 2 Old Classroom | 6 Special Classroom |
| 3 New Classroom | 7 Multipurpose Room |
| 4 Lobby | 8 Stage |



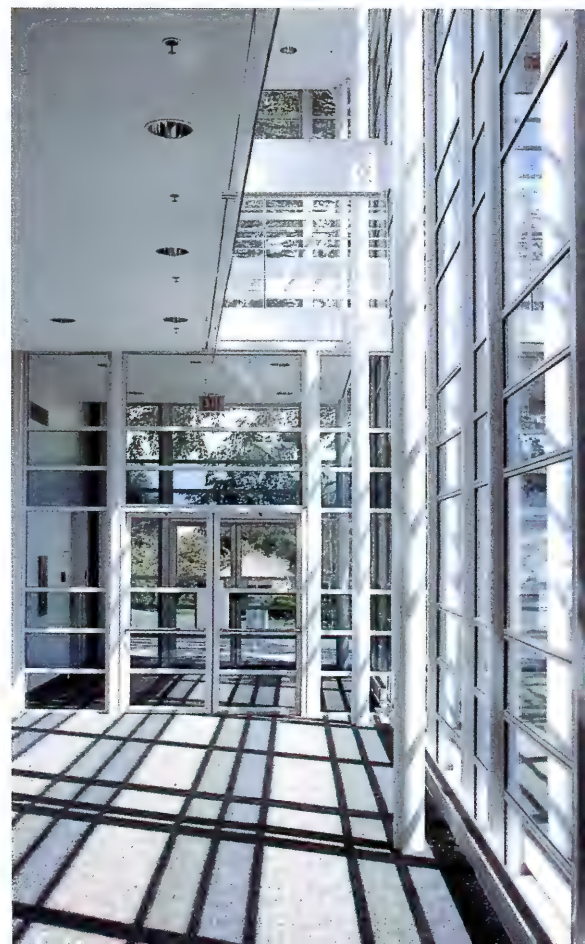
Protruding bricks lend texture to rear wall (above left). The scale of the addition is sensitive to the site and neighborhood (left). Vestibules give an open, airy feeling to the school (right).

free-flowing window pattern viewed against an orderly grid of bricks that emerge ever-so-slightly from the wall surface.

Typical of its generation, the renovated Wasena is the most technologically advanced of any elementary school in Roanoke. Each classroom contains four computer stations for students. Each teacher's desk is wired both for computer and cable television, which allows the teachers to demonstrate computer lessons on a large-screen television. All computers and televisions are wired into a central system located in a library workroom, where videos or CDs can be directed to any classroom.

"The only real complaint from parents is a little dissatisfaction with the size of the library," says the city's Kelley. "But we sacrificed some library size in order to make the classrooms larger – that is the direction that education is moving. We felt that we could transfer a lot of the technology into the classrooms."

– Vernon Mays



Wave of the Future

Biotechnology Research Park • Baskervill & Son



Biotech Center anchors a prominent downtown corner.



Photos: Philip Beaurline

A curved bridge (above) sweeps through the atrium to provide ease of access between buildings. Main entry is through a portal and secure gate (below).

20

Grounded in the spirit of Virginia architecture, the brick-clad buildings of the Virginia Biotechnology Research Park nod to tradition in their outward expression while striving on the interior to satisfy the diverse demands of modern scientific research. The complex, designed by Baskervill & Son in collaboration with Kelso & Easter, both of Richmond, is the first stage of a long-term plan by the Commonwealth of Virginia to develop a research center in downtown Richmond adjacent to the Medical College of Virginia campus. The buildings provide a number of open breakout areas for serendipitous communication between colleagues, private offices and labs for individual research projects, and centralized spaces for training, research assistance, and special events.

A spacious atrium connects the administrative Biotech Center with the L-shaped research facility, known as Biotech One, that cradles it on two sides. Atrium walls, which are clad in brick with a precast concrete base, are punctured with deep-recessed windows that reveal the thickness of the wall and lend a sense of authority to the building. A curved bridge, detailed with steel handrails and perforated steel panels, slices across the space overhead to link the two independent structures and create a visible symbol of technology.

Daylight also played a major role in the design: Two half-pyramid skylights illuminate the atrium and great effort was made to configure offices and labs with exterior windows.



0 15 30

First Floor Plan

- | | |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| 1 Entry Courtyard | 5 Offices |
| 2 Atrium Lobby | 6 Conference Room |
| 3 Teleconference | 7 Computer Library |
| 4 Research Labs | |

Under the Rotunda

Herndon Fortnightly Library • Hughes Group Architects



A mandate to mesh with the downtown master plan for the Town of Herndon put immediate – and constructive – limits on the design of the Herndon Fortnightly Library by Hughes Group Architects, of Sterling. By placing the library prominently on the northern edge of a town green being developed to heighten the civic presence of Herndon's municipal center (see *Inform*, 1995: Number 4), the master plan called for a building which would be a local landmark, rather than sit quietly in the background. In turn, the forms and materials chosen for the library are assembled at a scale that's fitting for a civic building, which keeps the momentum building as Herndon works toward its goal of a viable village center.

In concert with the plan, the new library has three entrances divided between the upper and lower levels and it functions as a sort of gateway from Willow Street to the town green. In addition to its contributions at the urban scale, the library needed to be inviting for patrons, timeless in its design, and flexible enough to absorb changes in technology. The clients also required that technology be made accessible and familiar – an issue of great importance in libraries everywhere.

Hughes Group dressed the building in monumental garb by capping it with a large dome, reminiscent of many great libraries before it. Inside the rotunda, the great wooden dome unifies the many disparate functional elements of the building. On the lower level along Willow Street, a portico announces the entrance and provides a generous overhang for patrons to protect themselves from the elements. A large circular window introduces the dome form to the principal street and makes a playful gesture in the children's reading room inside. Said one patron: "The dome provides a sense of identity to a town center still lacking in character."



The soaring rotunda is the library's centerpiece when viewed from inside and out (above and top). The scale shifts to a more intimate level in the children's section (right).



Photos: Dan Cunningham

Wired for Business

Cox Cable Headquarters • Hayes Seay Mattern & Mattern



Photos: Rick Alexander

The architects selected a brick with local associations and capped the building with a winglike form.

22

The suburban site selected for this new headquarters building for Cox Cable in Roanoke was blessed with gorgeous views of the surrounding mountains. Why, reasoned Roanoke architects Hayes Seay Mattern & Mattern, shouldn't the building exploit those views?

Integrating the 27,000-square-foot office building with the environment became the overriding design strategy. Beginning with the site plan, the building was oriented to take full advantage of mountain vistas. New trees and light fixtures in the parking lot were laid out to form allees that frame views to the west. And two patios for outdoor eating are located to provide unobstructed sightlines toward the mountains.

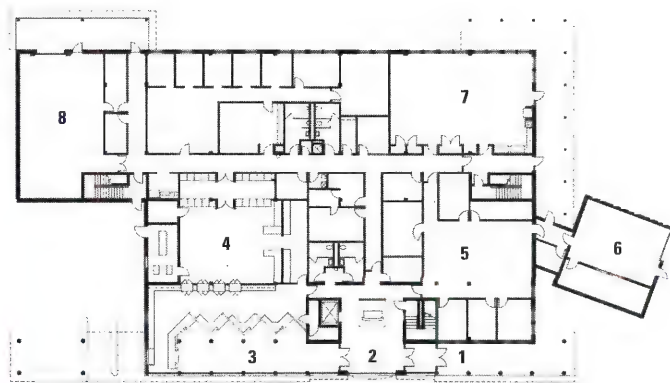
The client representatives voiced a desire for the building

to somehow represent the nature of their business while offering a friendly business environment. So materials such as crisp metal panels, glass, steel, and brick are combined in a high-tech expression of this telecommunications company. On the human comfort side of the ledger, light pours into the 16-foot-high cashier's lobby through open glass walls.

The brick that was selected for the building has a local flavor, matching the orange-red clay prevalent in the area. Masses of brick stand in weighty counterpoint to the delicate steel, metal, and glass detailing on the building exterior, which culminates in a winglike form. Employees working in the core of the building enjoy the benefit of natural light coming in from clerestory windows worked into the rooftop barrel vault.

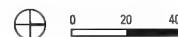


The cable station's studio is a freestanding box (at right in photo, above).



First Floor Plan

- | | |
|--------------------|----------------------|
| 1 Entrance | 5 Sales |
| 2 Reception | 6 Studio |
| 3 Cashiers | 7 Multipurpose/Lunch |
| 4 Converter Repair | 8 Warehouse |





The architects drew inspiration for the buildings from traditional seaside architecture and visits to other Coast Guard stations.

23

Coastal Connections

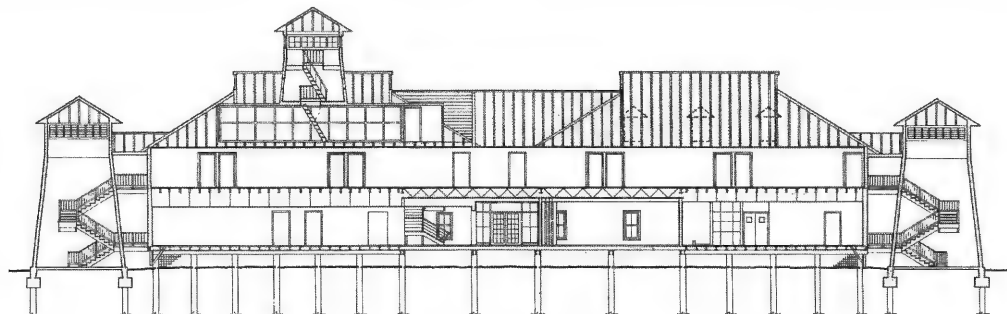
U.S. Coast Guard Berthing Facility • Hanbury Evans Newill Vlattas & Co.

Images of boathouses and lighthouses are evoked by the rustic design of this complex in the Eastern Shore community of Chincoteague. The buildings, designed by Norfolk architects Hanbury Evans Newill Vlattas, were influenced by the ideas of townspeople, business owners, town officials, and Coast Guard staff, who voiced concerns over new construction on the island.

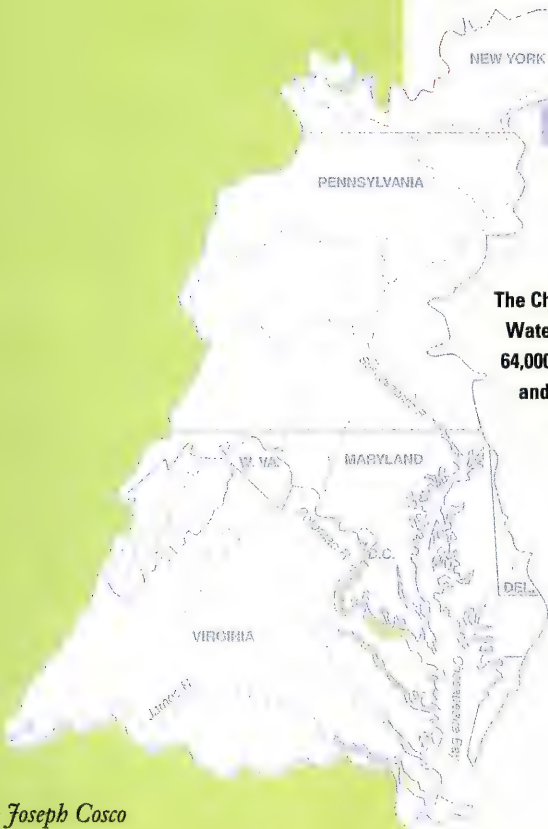
High on the list of public opinions was maintaining the cozy scale of adjacent Main Street. The architects addressed that concern by dividing the functional needs into three buildings—one for berthing, another for offices, a third for storage. Their balanced arrangement on the site recalls the venerable tradition of Coast

Guard stations along the Atlantic coast, while responding to the formality of nearby historic homes. In deference to neighbors, the design team minimized the buildings' massing and oriented them so that views of the sound would remain unobstructed.

Archival research and visits to other Coast Guard stations generated a menu of design details, including cedar shingle siding and roofs with overhanging eaves. The berthing facility houses 48 personnel in second-floor rooms and provides a mix of functions on the first floor, including a dining room, kitchen, and weight training room. In the administration building are Commanders' offices and the operations/communications centers.



CONCENTRATED EFFORTS TO SAVE THE



The Chesapeake Bay Watershed covers 64,000 square miles and parts of six states.



Conventional Subdivision: This typical plan contains 84 lots – most in the two- to four-acre range and a handful up to 15 acres. Most of the site is given to private lots; open space consists of wetlands or sewage land. This layout demands some 20,000 linear feet of roads. Adding rooftops, driveways, and patios, there is 26.3 acres of impervious surface to generate polluted runoff. The scattered plan also requires each house to have a septic system.

24

By Joseph Cosco

The next time you're stuck in a traffic jam in Northern Virginia or Hampton Roads, or see yet another subdivision going up in the Middle Peninsula or Eastern Shore, think of the Chesapeake Bay. Think of the Bay not as a refuge from sprawl, but as victim – the victim of low-density development, a mania for highway building, and enduring myths of Ozzie and Harriet.

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation *wants* you to think about it, for the foundation is wed to the idea that the Bay is only as unsullied as the land around it. How we build on the land equates with how we treat the Bay. Saving the Bay means short-circuiting sprawl. Saving the Bay means divorcing Ozzie and Harriet.

That's the message from the watchdog group whose only mission is to "Save the Bay." But it's a tough sell, getting people to relate highways and subdivisions to underwater grasses and shellfish. "In terms of land-use policy, we're really trying to turn something around that has had 50 years of institutional support. That's a huge jug-

ernaut to try to get in front of," says Lee R. Epstein, director of the foundation's lands program. "But if we can't change the way people think about land and how they use it, we are just going to lose the Bay."

Since its creation 30 years ago, when the Bay's obituary was being written, the Annapolis-based foundation has played a central role in efforts to restore health to the 195-mile-long estuary, the largest in North America. The foundation, which also has offices in Richmond, Norfolk and Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, works through education, coalition-building, political activism, and the occasional lawsuit. Despite notable successes with controlling point-source pollution, cleaning up the water, and restoring marine life, the Bay's condition remains serious but stable. But that stability is threatened by sprawl which, left unchecked, can wipe out all the progress made in cleaning up the Bay.

For that reason, the foundation is placing a new emphasis on land-use and transportation issues in pursuit of its three key goals: reduce pollution, restore habitat, and increase fisheries. According to the foundation, sprawl is the predominant devel-

opment pattern in the Bay's watershed, a massive area comprising 64,000 square miles and populated by 15 million people. Because sprawl transforms the land from a filter into a funnel, it produces five to seven times the sediment and phosphorus as a forest. And because sprawl requires more cars than towns, it creates more pollution that finds its way into the Bay.

The alternative, says the foundation, is a philosophy of growth organized around compact development and public transit. It's an approach that has put the foundation on the opposite side of the fence from other environmental groups. "It's difficult for us to say we support urbanization and density," Epstein says. "We went out on a limb saying we're supporting fairly dense development."

Conceding the inevitability of growth, the foundation is attempting to offer practical alternatives to sprawl. Three such alternatives were outlined in a recent demonstration project that put the foundation's philosophy into practice. Using principles for Bay-friendly growth and development, a team of consulting architects designed hypothetical communities

BAY



Chesapeake Bay Foundation/Dodson and Associates

Cluster Subdivision: This alternative has 52 lots in three clusters. The western clusters contain 44 one-sixth-acre lots, whose small size requires shared septic systems. Eight high-end residences occupy one-acre lots at the other end of the site. This plan preserves the rural character, water vistas, and forests for residents' enjoyment. It requires less than half the roadway, saves about \$525,000 in infrastructure costs, and generates less runoff.

for three real tracts of land. "We wanted to present plans and pictures to show people that these are communities," Epstein says of the studies.

The three sites included an example of rural development on the banks of the Rappahannock River; the redevelopment of a suburban tract in Fairfax County; and the revitalization of an urban pocket in Prince George's County, Maryland. Plans for the Rappahannock tract, known as Remlik Hall Farm, called for a cluster subdivision with higher density, smaller lots, and much less roadway than a conventional subdivision. In addition, the cluster plan would preserve more farmland and forest and reduce storm water pollutants to the Bay, the foundation maintains.

While there are no plans to develop Remlik Hall Farm, the other two sites show signs of future development or redevelopment – and not along lines championed by the foundation. A more immediate disappointment in the foundation's eyes is Haymount, a new town planned for a site near Fredericksburg. In many ways, Haymount promises to embody many principles endorsed by the foundation. The layout for the New Urbanist mixed-use community is "a wonderful plan," Epstein says. The drawback is location.

"The problem we had was that Haymount was located 12 to 15 miles outside of town and itself could become a promoter of sprawl," she says. "We opposed it because of its location. But once it was approved finally and fully, we butted out and wished [developer] John Clark well."

The foundation believes that growth should proceed by



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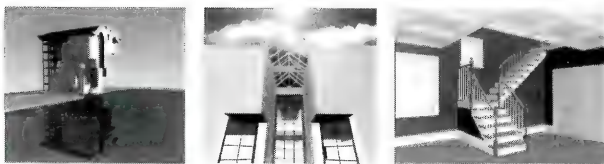
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filling in underused urban and suburban pockets, channeling new development into and adjacent to existing cities and towns, and using trains to connect and organize the growth. Freestanding rural subdivisions, like Haymount, are seen as a last resort.

Another recent foundation initiative, called "A Network of Livable Communities," sought to show the wisdom of using underused space in the metropolitan Washington area. The foundation examined 40 centers suitable for growth, linked them into a public transportation network, and showed that there are practical, attractive alternatives to throwing up more suburbs. "We didn't do it as well as we wanted to do it, because it was just too big," says Kristin Pauley, the foundation's manager of urban and metropolitan programs. "But it makes a point. It starts to break up people's thinking."

Both "A Network of Livable Communities" and the three-part demonstration project, called "A Better Way to Grow," were turned into publications that are distributed to elected officials, bureaucrats, and activist groups. "You hope that those people get some spark out of it," Pauley says. The next step is to take the message to a more grass-roots level. "People feel overpowered by sprawl. They can use this to give them ammunition."

Already supported by more than 1,000 companies and 350 other foundations, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation is now busy forging new alliances with the Urban League and other groups to communicate the idea that vital, economically-sound urban areas are important to the Bay's health.

The foundation's educational efforts take many forms, including field trips for students and adults to work/study sites throughout the

Bay watershed. In late March, the foundation co-sponsored a regional conference at the University of Maryland with area chapters of the American Society of Landscape Architects to explore the practice of sustainable development.

In 1995, the foundation set 10-year environmental benchmarks in areas such as water clarity, toxics, underwater grasses, migratory fish, forested buffers, and wetlands. Success in the quantifiable scientific categories is largely contingent on gains made in the land-related categories. The fact is, during the next 15 to 20 years the Chesapeake Bay watershed will have to absorb more than 2 million additional people, mostly in Virginia and Maryland. The Environmental Protection Agency projects that the growth will gobble up 90,000 acres of resource lands — farms and forests — every year into the foreseeable future. The foundation's goal is to reduce that rate of loss by 25 percent to 67,500 acres annually. That can only be done, the foundation says, by limiting sprawl.

"It's more than a daunting task — a little 80,000-member organization facing this juggernaut," Epstein says. "But we've got to call into question old models of doing things. We're in it for the long term because it's not going to happen overnight."

Joseph Cosco is a freelance writer based in Norfolk.




David Owen Hawthurst

The foundation established 10-year goals to gauge its success in restoring natural habitat.

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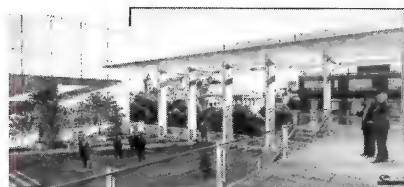
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Architect: Baskervill & Son, Richmond

Project: Page Hospital Family Clinic

Baskervill & Son has designed a new freestanding medical office building for Page Memorial Hospital in Luray. The 5,600-square-foot facility, which accommodates five physicians and can be expanded for more, consists of a core of support and staff spaces, surrounded by exam rooms and offices. 804-343-1000.

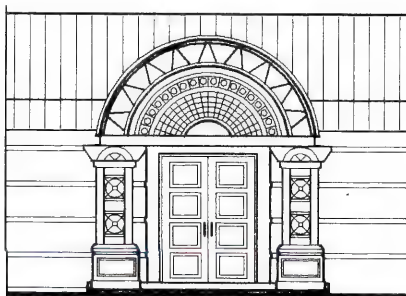
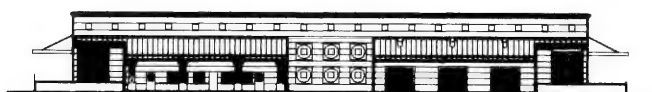


Architect: Scribner Messer Brady & Wade, P.C., Richmond

Project: One Capitol Square

Responding to the nearby Capitol, the former Intermart Building in Richmond is undergoing a renovation synthesizing the building's original Modern intentions with the 1990s renaissance. A metal pergola above Ninth Street defines a roof garden and frames views of Capitol Square. 804-782-2115.

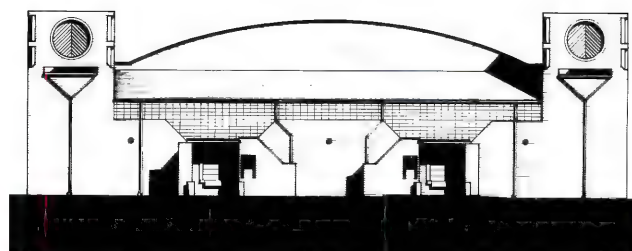
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Architect: Chou & Associates, P.C., Virginia Beach

Project: Gas Cylinders Facility, DSCR

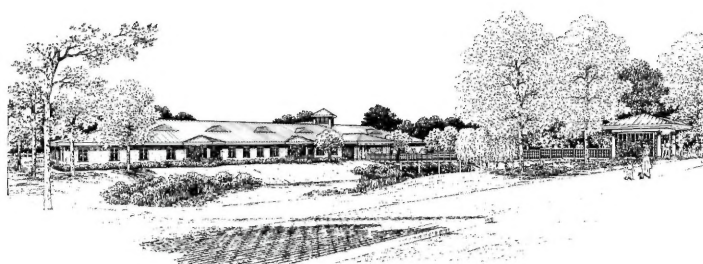
This project in Richmond consists of renovating an existing 45,000-square-foot warehouse to house a new gas cylinder refurbishing plant. It processes and recycles hazardous environmental ozone-depleting substances. Additional administrative offices and laboratories are included. 757-499-3667.



Architect: James William Ritter, Architect, Alexandria

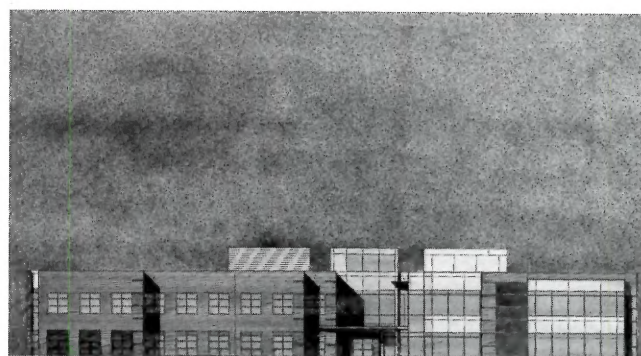
Project: Robinson Terminal

This major supplier of newsprint in the Washington metropolitan area is expanding its warehousing facility in Springfield. Although the building has a simple warehouse function, it is visually prominent from the Capital Beltway and the owners desire a landmark building. 703-548-4405.



Architect: Shriver & Holland Associates, Norfolk
Project: Norfolk Botanical Gardens Education Center

This education/conference center provides a learning environment for all ages. It reflects an ecological mission through creative site design, incorporating a storm drainage pond planned as a living laboratory. Included are classrooms, a demonstration area/children's library, and conference hall. 757-627-4525.



Architect: Scribner Messer Brady & Wade, P.C., Richmond
Project: Research Building #10, Va. Tech Corporate Research Center

This 40,000-square-foot building in Blacksburg is designed to complement the aesthetic of the adjacent award-winning Building #7, also designed by Scribner Messer Brady & Wade. The exterior terra cotta color is accented with the crepuscular maroon brick of its predecessor. 804-782-2115.

29



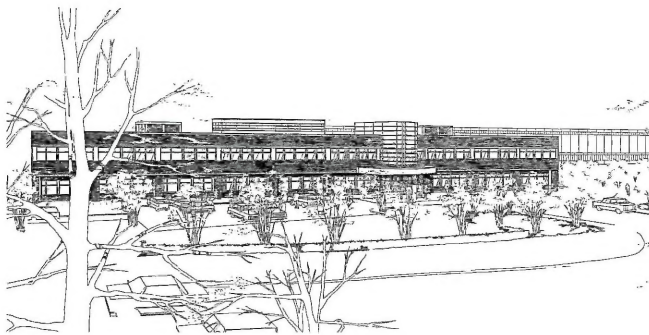
Architect: Marcellus Wright Cox & Smith Architects, P.C., Richmond
Project: Richmond College Pavilion/Lodge, University of Richmond

This 11,000-square-foot building will include "The Living Room of the College," a large space with a gas fireplace and timbered ceiling. Amenities include meeting rooms, student lounges, a game room, and offices for the dean. Construction begins in May; occupancy is slated for Summer 1998. 804-780-9067.



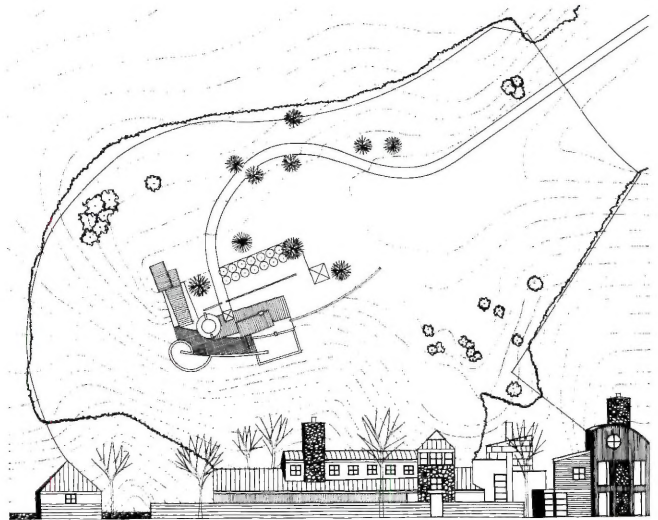
Architect: Clark Nexsen, Architecture and Engineering, Norfolk
Project: Bachelor's Enlisted Quarters

This 7,243-square-meter facility has four floors and 96 residential suites, each with two private rooms and shared kitchen and bath. The design – including a lounge, recreation facilities, and outdoor courts– will be adapted to three locations at the U.S. Naval Air Station in Sigonella, Italy. 757-455-5800.



Architect: Rose Architects, Richmond
Project: Dollar Tree Stores Headquarters and Distribution Center

The project, on 40 acres in Chesapeake, supports the retailer's expansion and includes an automated 400,000-square-foot distribution center. The architect and contractor compose a fast-track team to complete the projects with aggressive cost control and a 10-month completion schedule. 804-747-1305.



Architect: Robert M. Gurney, AIA, Alexandria
Project: Bohon/Weaver Residence

This 10,000-square-foot house, located on seven acres of land in Darnestown, Maryland, is composed of flat-roofed, shed-roofed, and vaulted-roofed volumes organized around a cylindrical hinge intended to modulate the structure and the landscape. 703-739-3843.

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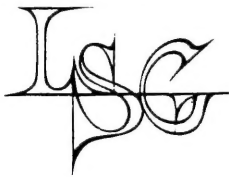
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Churches, by nature, tend to start small and grow as their congregation expands. Such was the case at Westminster Presbyterian Church in Alexandria, a classic Georgian-style edifice which had blossomed over its 50-year history into a 53,000-square-foot complex including a 700-seat sanctuary, fellowship hall, and chapel – with office and classroom wings. But, for all its positive outcomes, Westminster's growth

created unforeseen problems. The conglomeration of buildings, a jumble of six nonaligned floor levels, posed an insurmountable barrier to its mem-

bers confined to wheelchairs.

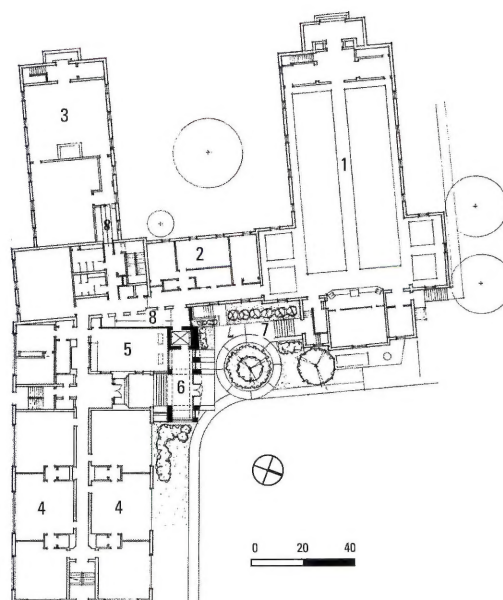
Enter Kerns Group Architects, of Arlington, who was commissioned to solve the accessibility dilemma. "The previous solution was an electrified lift that only gave access to the main sanctuary," says principal Thomas L. Kerns, FAIA. But church leaders wanted to open the entire complex to the physically impaired. Kerns proposed placing an elevator on the rear of the church at the juncture of the classroom and office wings. His observations of the comings and goings at the church also prompted a further proposal. The rear door, which was the closest entrance to the parking lot, was in fact the primary entrance, noted Kerns. "It needed to be more welcoming."

Now the completed addition juxtaposes a new skylit lobby and a slender elevator tower in a collage of texture and form that took Design Award honors in 1996 from AIA Northern Virginia. Materials were selected for compatibility with the surrounding neighborhood and existing church, which is red brick with a slate roof and cast stone accents. Kerns contained the new lobby in a two-story block and butted it against the taller elevator hoistway to diminish the tower's scale. "We put an emphasis on durable materials," says Kerns, who credits associate Andrew Cheng, AIA, with many of the project's design ideas.

When the job was done, not only were modest plans for a utilitarian addition satisfied, but Kerns had created an appropriate entrance and focal point for the church. — *Vernon Mays*



On top of the lobby, Kerns placed a block of cast stone that is inscribed with the universal symbol of the Presbyterian church.



First Floor Plan

- 1 Sanctuary
- 2 Administration
- 3 Chapel
- 4 Classrooms
- 5 Main Offices
- 6 New Lobby
- 7 Court Yard
- 8 Wheelchair Ramp

Michael Dersin